

ABRAHAM RECEIVES HIS PROMISED SON—AND THEN HAS HIS FAITH SORELY TESTED

Presented by

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In our Sunday-morning Bible class on “a journey through the Old Testament,” Blake and I have learned a lot about the nature of God. One of the things that we have come to realize is that when God promises to do something, He never fails to do it. Of course, this should not surprise us since, as Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18 both tell us, it is impossible for God to lie.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we see that God had promised to make of Abraham “a great nation.” Then, later in Genesis 18:14, God told the old patriarch whose wife was far past the age of child bearing, “At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah **will** have a son” (Genesis 18:14). Sure enough, several years later, as Genesis 21:1-4 records,

“The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.”

God had kept His word. Abraham and Sarah finally had the beloved son that the Bible refers to as “the child of promise” (Galatians 4:28). We can tell from the information provided to us in Genesis 21:6-8 just how happy Abraham and Sarah were at this miraculous turn of events.

“Sarah said, ‘God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.’ And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.”

But Abraham’s happiness was not to last, as Genesis 22:1-2 explains when it says,

“It came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham, take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”

Can you imagine a father hearing such words: “**Take your son whom you love, and offer him as a burnt offering**”? I can only guess how Abraham must have felt. But I do **not** have to guess regarding how Abraham reacted to God’s command, because Genesis 22:3-13 tells us what happened next.

“Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together. They then came to the place of which God had told him.

“And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order. And he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. Abraham then stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son from Me.’

“Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.”

Once again, I can only imagine how Abraham must have felt when he heard the words, “Do not lay your hand on the lad.” How happy Abraham must have been when he realized that his son Isaac would be spared! But **why** did God spare Isaac? Genesis 22:12 provides the answer. “Now,” said the Angel of the Lord, “I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son from Me.”

Because of Abraham’s obedience to God’s commands, his son Isaac was allowed to live. But that was not all that happened on that fateful day on Mt. Moriah so many long years ago. God also said to Abraham,

“I have sworn that because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, I will bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:15-18).

Abraham had no way to know it at the time, but as a direct result of his faithful obedience to God, Isaac eventually would marry Rebekah, and they would have two sons—Jacob and Esau. To Jacob, twelve sons would be born. And from those sons would ultimately come the tribes of Israel, one of which would be Judah. And out of that tribe would arise the mighty “Lion of Judah” (Revelation 5:5)—Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

When God told Abraham, “All the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed My voice,” He could not have stated the matter any more accurately than He did. Through Abraham came Christ, whom John the Baptist described as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Abraham—because of his faithfulness to God—**was willing** to watch his son die. God—because of His faithfulness to His promises—**did watch His Son die!**

As a result of this unusual series of events—which began thousands of years ago at a mountain in the Promised Land called Moriah, and then culminated two millennia ago at a hillside outside of Jerusalem known as Calvary—every accountable human being who has ever lived, or who ever will live, has an opportunity be forgiven of his or her sins, and enjoy what Paul called “the gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

But the key to receiving God’s promised blessings today is—just as it was in the days of Abraham—faithful obedience to God’s commands. We know what God expected of Abraham. And we know the blessing that came to Abraham, just as God had promised, because he was willing to do what God said.

So what does God expect of **us**? How can **we** receive the blessings that God has promised us? Here is the answer. We must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. As Jesus Himself said in John 8:24, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” We must repent of our past sins. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, “Unless you repent you will perish.” We must be willing to confess Christ publicly as God’s Son and our Savior. Paul wrote in Romans 10:10, “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” We must be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. As Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). And then we must be “faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10).

In Exodus 19:5 God said, “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people.” That statement is as true today as it was the day when God first made it. We need to constantly ask ourselves if we are truly obeying the voice of God. If we are, then we can look forward to the day when God will say to us, as He once did to Abraham, “I have sworn that because you have done this thing, I will bless you.” What a joy it will be to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:23).